

#Monday Night Massacre as Trump Fires Acting Attorney General and Replaces Immigration ICE Director

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With a reference to the [Saturday Night Massacre](#) that took place during the Watergate scandal under President Richard Nixon, the hashtag #MondayNightMassacre came alive on Monday night after President Donald Trump fired acting Acting Attorney General Sally Yates and accused her of “betrayal” for refusing to enforce a controversial immigration order targeting Muslims and refugees.

At the same time, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) John Kelly, announced in [a statement](#) that Daniel Ragsdale, the acting director of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), was being replaced by Thomas D. Homan.



Less than an hour after the ACLU congratulated Yates on Monday evening for her “remarkable” and “powerful” refusal to enforce Trump’s controversial immigration ban, she was out of a job for taking such a stance.

“I am responsible for ensuring that the positions we take in court remain consistent with this institution’s solemn obligation to always seek justice and stand for what is right,” Yates [wrote](#) in her letter to DOJ lawyers. “At present, I am not convinced that the defense of the executive order is consistent with these responsibilities nor am I convinced that the executive order is lawful.”

After [weekend protests](#) followed the executive order by Trump and a [constitutional crisis emerged](#) when some immigration officials refused to follow a federal judge’s order to end the detention and deportation of people trying to enter the country, Yates’ rejection of the order, and her directive to all Department of Justice personnel to do the same, arrived as a dramatic development to an already politically strained and legally tenuous situation.

Though no reason was given in Secretary Kelly’s statement for Ragsdale’s removal from his position at ICE (in fact, his name was not even mentioned), his replacement was noted for serving “as the executive associate director of ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO).” In that capacity, the statement continues, Mr. Homan “led ICE’s efforts to identify,

arrest, detain, and remove illegal aliens, including those who present a danger to national security or are a risk to public safety, as well as those who enter the United States illegally or otherwise undermine the integrity of our immigration laws and our border control efforts.”

Trump first referenced Yates’ defiance in [a tweet](#), one in which he complained that Senate Democrats were delaying his cabinet appointments—including his nominee for attorney general Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Al.)—and that he was also stuck with “an Obama A.G.”

But the real news came shortly later when the White House issued a statement announcing Yates had been fired and that Dana Boente, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, had already been sworn in as her replacement. The full White House statement:

The acting Attorney General, Sally Yates, has betrayed the Department of Justice by refusing to enforce a legal order designed to protect the citizens of the United States. This order was approved as to form and legality by the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel.

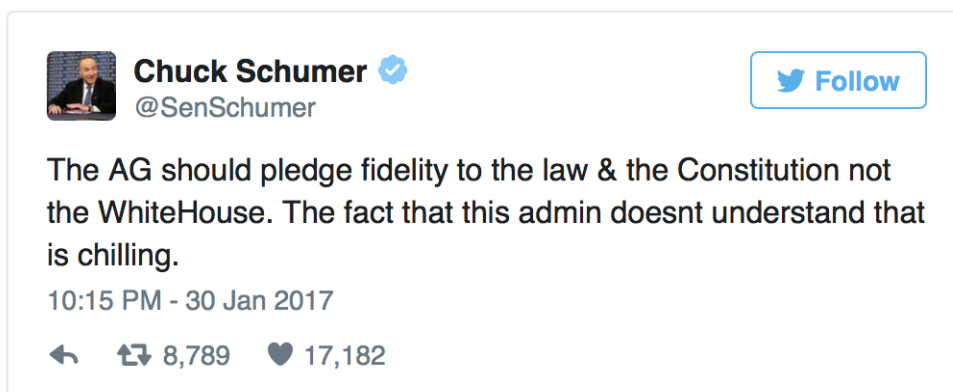
Ms. Yates is an Obama Administration appointee who is weak on borders and very weak on illegal immigration.

It is time to get serious about protecting our country. Calling for tougher vetting for individuals travelling from seven dangerous places is not extreme. It is reasonable and necessary to protect our country.

Tonight, President Trump relieved Ms. Yates of her duties and subsequently named Dana Boente, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, to serve as Acting Attorney General until Senator Jeff Sessions is finally confirmed by the Senate, where he is being wrongly held up by Democrat senators for strictly political reasons.

“I am honored to serve President Trump in this role until Senator Sessions is confirmed. I will defend and enforce the laws of our country to ensure that our people and our nation are protected,” said Dana Boente, Acting Attorney General.

Democratic lawmakers were among those quick to condemn President Trump.



Democratic leader in the House, Rep. Nancy Pelos of California, released a stern statement against Trump in which she commended Yates for upholding her pledge to defend the constitution.

“Tonight, the acting attorney general was fired for upholding the constitution of the United

States. What the Trump administration calls betrayal is an American with the courage to say that the law and the constitution come first,” Pelosi said. Citing the refusal of House Republicans to vote for a House bill which would have rescinded the immigration order, Pelosi said those lawmakers will ultimately have to account for where they stood as Trump trampled on the rights of refugees and religious minorities. “Republicans,” she said, “will have to decide whether they will be complicit in the President’s reckless, wrathful and unconstitutional agenda.

And Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) tweeted:



Following Yate’s letter refusal to endorse the travel restrictions, Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the Immigrants’ Rights Project at the ACLU, had praised the move.

“This is a remarkable but welcome development and sends a powerful message that there’s something very wrong with a Muslim ban,” Gelernt stated.

Asked to respond to the news that Yates was subsequently terminated by Trump, Gelernt told *Common Dreams* that “her firing is very troubling, but we will move forward. After her principled stand, it will now be impossible for the White House to continue stating that our lawsuits have no merit.”

And in a video message following an evening rally and protest against the ban on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) explained why the Muslim ban is such an egregious policy and why it must be resisted at all costs:



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